

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the process for the establishment of speed limits on state highways. See Policy 06C-61 for the establishment of temporary speed limits in work zones.

Policy

It is the policy of the Utah Department of Transportation to establish speed limits on state highways on the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation in accordance with the most recent edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Speed zone studies will be conducted upon request of the Region Director/District Engineer, the Region Traffic Engineer, or other recognized authority. In conducting a speed zone study, input from local government officials will be considered. Establishment of speed limits may not violate the provisions of Sections 41-6-46 and 41-6-47 of the Utah Code Annotated.

The statutory speed limit shall be based on the 85th percentile speed rounded to the nearest 5 mph increment, and giving consideration to:

1. Road surface characteristics, shoulder condition, grade, alignment, and sight distance.
2. Roadside development and culture, and roadside friction.
3. Safe speeds for curves or hazardous locations within the zone.
4. Pedestrian activity, parking practices, and other traffic.
5. Reported accident experience for the most recent 3 year period.

In establishing the statutory speed limit, consideration may be given for a speed limit below the 85th percentile speed based on the above factors. Any reduction below the 85th percentile speed shall not exceed 10 mph when the 85th percentile speed is greater than 45 mph and 5 mph when the 85th percentile speed is less than, or equal to, 45 mph. The reduced speed limit shall be reviewed with local authorities.

Whenever the speed limit has been reduced below the 85th percentile speed as a result of the engineering and traffic investigation, another study will be made from six to twelve months later. If necessary, the speed limit will then be adjusted to ensure that it is not more than 5 mph below the 85th percentile speed. Local authorities will be advised before any changes are made.

Establishment Of Speed Limits On State Highways UDOT 06C-25

Effective: October 4, 1991

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In conducting the study, if no reduction of the speed limit is recommended and local authorities are not satisfied with the results of the Department study, an appeal process is available and is described later in this policy/procedure. All appeals must be substantiated by facts and reliable data.

Procedures

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Responsibility: Region Director/District Engineer or Region Traffic Engineer

Actions

1. Region Director/District Engineer or Region Traffic Engineer receives a request from a local government to perform a speed zone study. This request from the local government should include reasons why it is felt that the speed limit should be changed together with recommendations as to what the speed limit should be.
2. Requests the Engineer for Traffic and Safety to conduct the necessary study.

Responsibility: Engineer for Traffic and Safety

3. Upon receipt of request from a Region/District for a speed limit study, requests that the Traffic and Safety Studies Engineer performs the necessary study.

Responsibility: Traffic and Safety Studies Engineer

4. Initiates field study to include three year accident history, roadway geometry, roadside developments throughout the highway segment, pedestrian activity, school crossings, 85th percentile speed, and other considerations.
5. Evaluates data to determine appropriate speed limit in accordance with MUTCD.
6. Prepares study report and submits recommendations with appropriate supporting data to the Region Director/District Engineer.

Responsibility: Region Director/District Engineer

7. Informs local government of study results. Schedules meeting with local government officials, if necessary. Requests Engineer for Traffic and Safety to issue appropriate T.E.O.

Responsibility: Local government agency (appeal process)

8. May appeal the speed study recommendations to the Department Executive Staff. All appeals shall be based on violation of Department Policy or MUTCD Standards.

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Responsibility: Engineer for Traffic and Safety

9. Issues required T.E.O.

Responsibility: Region Director/District Engineer

10. Executes necessary steps to comply with T.E.O. including preparation and placement of new speed limit signs or relocation of existing signs.